Vanessa Lasseson

Rwanda, Inc.

Written 18 years after the Rwandan genocide, Rwanda, Inc. follows the recovery and development of Rwanda. The novel was named Rwanda, Inc. due to President Kagame’s leadership, which was likened to a business CEO. It opens with a summary of Rwanda at the time of the novel, flooding with infrastructure development under President Kagame's leadership. The novel cited long-term successes, including the percentage of the population living in poverty, which fell from 56.9 % in 2006 to 44.9 % in 2011, translating in to 1 million people who left poverty.

The novel then entered in to a discussion of the civil war and genocide, which originated in the division between the Hutus and Tutsis. Originally, the names represented socioeconomic classes that co-existed in Rwanda. The Tutsi raised the cattle and the Hutu farmed the land but this was taken advantage of and misinterpreted by Belgian colonizers. The hatred that developed from the distinction was complex but led to organized massacres of one ethnic group over the other throughout Rwanda’s history. President Kagame’s past was one of the personal examples. He, as well as many other Rwandans, fled Rwanda for Uganda to escape death. He grew up in a refugee camp but he wanted to return to Rwanda, his home country. Kagame and his friends eventually formed the Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) while serving in the Ugandan army. The purpose was to unify the country and remove the Hutu, Tutsi, and Twa labels. Following the genocide, Kagame led the RPF in reinstating order, including burying the dead and providing military protection.

Kagame did not want to become president of the transitional government but, after the first president was removed due to corruption, he took on the role. Corruption was not tolerated and he followed through with this. To deal with the domestic issues in Rwanda, he and his board decided to use and incorporate Rwandan traditions, essentially implementing Rwandan solutions for Rwanda. They instated *gacaca* “patch of grass” courts, a traditional justice system held at the local level where the accused confessed for a reduced penalty and the courts encouraged the victims to forgive. The promotion of one Rwanda, a country of reconciliation and one to be proud of, was one factor that made the transition to forgiveness possible.

Today, the government has decentralized and poured their resources into developing the infrastructure for the technology sector. However, the government has also poured their energies in to the poor and education. One example is *umuganda*, a national holiday where everyone works on a community project such as building classrooms. There is also the *Girinka* program, the “One Cow Per Poor Family,” which is incredibly powerful since a cow represents security and status in Rwandan society.

I felt that Rwanda Inc. was very informative on the progress of Rwanda as well as uplifting. Overcoming tragedy for the sake of each other, the children, and the future was very noble and it presented Rwanda as a country whose potential was just beginning.